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Marshall Clinton, "A Microcomputer Based Current Awareness Service." *Proceedings of the IATUL Conferences*. Paper 33.
<https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/iatul/1991/papers/33>

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A MICROCOMPUTER BASED CURRENT AWARENESS SERVICE

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In November 1989, the University of Toronto Library introduced ScanDoc which links a PC-based current awareness and a document delivery service. Current Contents on Diskette is used to scan the current literature; locally developed programs are used to print current awareness notification slips; and the Library's document delivery service provides requested items. The current awareness service is offered to the University's faculty and research staff without charge while the document delivery service is provided on a cost-recovery basis. This paper describes the institutional setting, the way in which the service is operated, and the impact that the service has had on its users and on the Library.

INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

The University of Toronto Library serves a potential user population of over 60,000. Science and Medicine Library, a part of the central library system, primarily serves students, faculty, and research staff from the health and allied health disciplines of the University of Toronto and is the focal point for extended services to the 35 members of the Health Sciences Information Consortium of Toronto which includes the 29 teaching hospitals affiliated with the University.

The Library offers a wide range of electronic information services:

- staff mediated on-line searching,
- current awareness services based on commercial systems,
- end-user searching (BRS Colleague and BRS AfterDark), and
- CD-ROMs (Medline, SciSearch, Excerpta Medica, and PsychLit).

The Library is currently implementing access to the Medline database and other files on a locally operated system. This service, which will support up to 50 concurrent users, will be offered to the students, faculty, and staff of the University, the staff of the area hospitals, and to the area health service practitioners.

CONTEXT FOR OFFERING A NEW SERVICE, SCANDOC

The Library supports a large walk-in clientele, but extensive use is made of its document delivery and interlibrary loan services. In 1989/90 the Science and Medicine Library received over 85,000 document requests.

The Science and Medicine Library has a long-standing outreach program which provides information and document delivery services to a large community of users who are supported by other on-campus libraries or who are off-campus. The off-campus users are located in area hospitals, on other U of T campuses, or in associated institutions. The Library has extended its outreach activities by offering the ScanDoc awareness and document delivery service.

Researchers want the most recent journal information for grant-seeking and many other research strategies. There are many ways of seeking and obtaining current awareness information. Browsing the latest issues of journals, browsing lists of journal contents, online SDI services, and current awareness services on diskettes (for the end-user) are some of the means of obtaining the most recent information.

Several current awareness services on diskette for the end-user are being marketed: Reference Update, Medical Sciences Weekly, and Current Contents on Diskette. Current Contents on Diskette is the most comprehensive of these and consists of six sections: Life Sciences; Clinical Medicine; Agriculture, Biology & Environmental Sciences; Physics, Chemistry & Earth Sciences; Engineering; and Social and Behavioral Science*. The Library subscribes to all of these sections and searches them to provide a unique service called ScanDoc.

WHAT IS SCANDOC?

The University of Toronto Library's ScanDoc joins a low-cost means of providing current awareness with local document delivery into a fast, efficient service. The link is the notification slip which provides a citation and serves as a document delivery request.

Features of ScanDoc

- based on Current Contents on Diskette
- for faculty at U. of T. and at affiliated hospitals
- FREE search results
- mailed each week
- optional document delivery service

How it Works

Users provide a profile of their research needs, listing keywords and synonyms. The librarian enters the search strategy and stores it as a search profile on Current Contents on Diskette. Stored search profiles are run each week when the new issue of a section is received. The results of the search are output as a computer file.

A database containing customer information is merged with the search output to print the citations on current awareness notification slips. The notification slips are delivered to the user via various campus and hospital delivery services. The ScanDoc current awareness service is provided free.

Users may use the notification slips to order photocopies through the Library's Document Delivery Section. Photocopy charges are 20 cents per page. If a journal is not in the collections of the central library system, users are informed of alternative campus locations. If the journal is not held anywhere at the University of Toronto, the user may request Interlibrary Loan using the ordering options on the notification slip.

The Library operates a computerized billing program, and charges are billed against each customer's account.

Enclosed with the results of each new profile is a copy of the strategy and a covering letter asking users if they require a revision. With each week's package of citations, a flyer is enclosed which explains how to obtain photocopies from the Library. Follow-up is done with users to insure that the service is meeting their expectations.

Staff Time

Each current awareness profile requires approximately one half hour for a librarian to set-up, enter, test, and store the search strategy and customer record. This only needs to be done once for each user although there may be later revisions to the strategy. It requires an average of approximately 2 1/2 minutes per week of a library assistant's time to run each of the stored

profiles, to print the references, and to mail out the notification slips. The actual printing takes an average of approximately 1 1/2 minutes per week for each profile, but can run unattended. On an annual basis about 2 1/6 hours are required to run, print, and mail each profile.

Costs of Providing the ScanDoc Service

The cost of providing the service is relatively low. There is an annual cost of \$1,700 for subscriptions to the six sections of Current Contents on Diskette; this is a fixed cost regardless of the number of profiles. The staff cost required to establish a profile is approximately \$12.00. The annual cost for each profile is less than \$7.00 for supplies (paper, envelopes, etc.) and less than \$34.00 for the staff time (running the profiles and printing & mailing citations).

The cost of the personal computer on which the profiles are stored and run, the cost of the printer which is used, the costs of promoting the ScanDoc service, and the staff costs to develop the customer database and printing programs are not included in the figures given above. The document delivery (photocopy) service is operated on a cost-recovery basis.

Advertising and Promotion

The Library has promoted the service in a variety of ways: direct mailings to potential customers, presentations at department and faculty meetings, brochures and flyers, promotion in a variety of campus publications. Direct mailing of promotional materials to potential customers has been a success; during the first six months of the service approximately 25% of the faculty who were sent direct mail promotion are now using the current awareness service. News of the service has also spread by "word of mouth," with virtually whole university departments signing up.

Impact of ScanDoc on the Library

ScanDoc has had an impact on procedures in the library. Space had to be reorganized and proper equipment set up. Time on available Library laser printers was reserved. Various in-house procedures were established for record-keeping. A staff manual was written. Searchers were trained. Document delivery procedures were adjusted and expanded.

ScanDoc coincides with other new developments and changes in library procedures, such as non-circulation of journals, and automation of such procedures as billing. ScanDoc has helped to propel, expand, and better define these and other new electronic developments.

ScanDoc Statistics Summary:

In the period November 1989 to May 31, 1990, 218 profiles (users) were established. Of these, 34% have requested document delivery photocopies. The average number of requests via Document Delivery for this group of 41 who borrowed is 8.2 requests or 5.2% of the total citations they received.

The ScanDoc service was introduced with an initial twenty-five users who had been selected to participate in a one month pilot study. Within one month the number of users has doubled. In the next two months the number of users had again doubled. The number of users again doubled during the subsequent three months. By the end of six months the number of ScanDoc users had grown from 25 to nearly 225.

Impact of ScanDoc on the User

From the results of a small telephone survey and other feedback, users are generally very pleased with the total ScanDoc service. The current awareness provision is recognized as extending their capability to scan the available literature efficiently, and the document delivery option has growing acceptance as a convenient way of obtaining the full-text document. Some researchers have become first-time users of the Library's Document Delivery service as a result of ScanDoc. Generally, every user surveyed was very pleased with the ScanDoc service.

Future

Some users are very interested in receiving the results in electronic form on a floppy disk rather than in print form. The Library is experimenting to see how efficiently information can be provided in this and other electronic ways (e.g., sending citations via e-mail).

Document Delivery procedures are being examined closely to extend the ScanDoc availability of journal titles held at other campus libraries and eventually at hospital libraries. The University of Toronto Library is currently revising the customer database management and printing programs to take into account recent changes in the Current Contents on Diskette system, to incorporate journal location information on the notification slip, and to make the ordering of photocopies as comprehensive and convenient as possible.

There are now four Library locations running the ScanDoc service: Science and Medicine Library, Earth Sciences Library, Engineering Library, and Robarts Library (as soon as Current Contents on Diskette: Social & Behavioral Sciences is released). The running of the stored profiles and the printing of the notification slips will soon be centralized in the Library Systems Office. This will make better use of staff time and eliminate duplication of effort. The Information and Reference departments will continue to promote the service to potential users and to set up the profile strategies.

CONCLUSION

In instituting ScanDoc, the Library has been able to provide a comprehensive current awareness and delivery service to a large number of people at a very low cost. The public relations value of ScanDoc has been extremely high in relation to its cost. ScanDoc is helping the Library to forge a closer link with faculty and to establish credibility as a strong intermediary in the research function.